

**I have a small vegetable garden, but I would like to add some fruit plants to my yard. I don't have the space for large trees or an orchard. What are my options?**

With the advent of COVID, there has been a huge interest in home food production. Vegetable gardening is easy since most of the crops are annuals. Fruit plants require a little more thought since they are perennials. Even though you don't have a large space, there are many options even for small yards. Select locations that have full sun and well-drained soil- most fruit plants will thrive under those conditions.

If you prefer fruit trees (apple and pear do best in northern New York), choose dwarf trees. With a height of 8 to 10 feet they are perfect for small yards. Dwarf trees also produce fruit rather quickly, usually after 3 years. Remember that you will need at least two compatible varieties for cross pollination.

There are also many shrubs that produce fruit. They can be incorporated right into your landscape, just like an ornamental plant. And like ornamentals, they also have attractive leaves, flowers, and fall color, along with being small in size.

Currants and gooseberries (*Ribes* spp) are multi-stemmed shrubs that reach about 3 feet in height. There are three species of currants- white, red, and black. The berries are about the size of a small pearl. Gooseberries are the size of a marble and the bushes have small thorns. Both have interesting leaves with scalloped edges.

Another shrub with edible fruit is the Nanking cherry (*Prunus tomentosa*). At 6 to 10 feet tall, it has a round, compact habit, and pink flowers in the spring. In addition, the exfoliating bark is a shiny reddish brown which adds interest during the winter months.

The honeyberry or haskap (*Lonicera caerulea edulis*) is about 3 to 4 feet tall and also has a compact habit. The berries look like an elongated blueberry, with a similar flavor. They ripen in June when not many other fruits are available, except strawberries.

Speaking of strawberries, they are another fruit option that will grow well in the home garden. An 8 by 8-foot area will yield enough berries for fresh eating and preservation. Plus, you have the option of June bearing varieties which produce fruit during a compact time period, or day-neutral varieties which produce fruit throughout the season. You can expect about 3 years of harvest before the site needs to be replanted.

All of the above can be used in pies, for jams and jellies, sauces, or for fresh eating and are high in beneficial nutrients and antioxidants. For more information, join in the upcoming program being offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County. 'Edible Landscaping' will be held virtually on Saturday, April 17 at 10 am. Please register at

<https://cornell.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYIde2grz8pGtzAD0ngGH48LUeSnCbiaQv> or visit [www.ccejefferson.org](http://www.ccejefferson.org).

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